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Fairfax, Virginia

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John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Park Landscape Management Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary	1-1
Project Scope	1-9
Project Methodology.....	1-13

CHAPTER TWO: LANDSCAPE PHYSICAL HISTORY

Property Background and Chain of Title	2-1
Horticultural History and Physical Development	2-2

CHAPTER THREE: RESOURCE INVENTORY

Introduction	3-1
Shrub Massings.....	3-4
Individual Shrubs	3-12
Trees	3-14
Garden Beds.....	3-24
Paths.....	3-25
Cultural Features.....	3-26

CHAPTER FOUR: LANDSCAPE CONDITION ASSESSMENT

Introduction.....	4-1
North Woodland	4-5
East Woodland.....	4-8
West Woodland.....	4-12
Upper Garden.....	4-14
Lower Garden	4-17

White Residence Surrounds.....	4-22
Utilitarian Area	4-25
Field	4-29
Circulation Features	4-32
Cultural Features.....	4-36
Treatment Recommendations for Maintaining Garden Areas	4-39
Treatment Recommendations for Aggressive Native Plants	4-40
Treatment Recommendations for Invasive Plant Species.....	4-42

CHAPTER FIVE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT APPROACH AND CONCEPTS

Introduction.....	5-1
FCPA General Management Planning.....	5-1
Planning and Design Considerations	5-4
Landscape Management Approach Alternatives	5-8

CHAPTER SIX: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND PARK DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction.....	6-1
Preferred Development Alternative	6-1
Parking and Circulation Alternatives Impact Assessment.....	6-3
Landscape Management and Development Guidelines	6-7
Management Zone Guidelines and Development Recommendations	6-17

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography	B-1
--------------------	-----

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

Figure 1-1: White Property Location Map

Figure 1-2: White Property Vicinity Map

Figure 1-3: Character Areas

CHAPTER TWO

Figure 2: 1938 Survey of White property showing location of buildings, topography, access drive, fences, and trees.

CHAPTER THREE

Figure 3-1: Resource Inventory

Figure 3-2: Resource Inventory (Garden Area Detail)

Figure 3-3: Photo Locations

CHAPTER FOUR

Figure 4-1: Character Areas

Figure 4-2: View of north woodland from woodland trail.

Figure 4-3: A dense line of beech trees in the southwest corner of the woodland.

Figure 4-4: View along northern edge of the east woodland.

Figure 4-5: View of pond.

Figure 4-6: View of debris piles along property line.

Figure 4-7: View of west woodland from woodland trail.

Figure 4-8: English ivy growing on tree trunks.

Figure 4-9: View of upper garden, an area referred to as the “tennis courts.”

Figure 4-10: John C. White Rhododendron in bloom.

Figure 4-11: View of garden area and trees in lawn.

Figure 4-12: Large concentration of microstegium in garden bed.

Figure 4-13: Garden bed exhibiting large concentration of English ivy infestation.

Figure 4-14: View of open area within the lower garden, tractor and blue spruces in the distance.

Figure 4-15: Overgrown nursery area.

Figure 4-16: Small nursery holding area behind blue spruces along the property line.

Figure 4-17: Mixture of hardwood trees around glass porch.

Figure 4-18: A large white oak surrounded by azaleas in back of the White residence.

Figure 4-19: House after being hit by a tree during Hurricane Isabel. This structure has since been demolished.

Figure 4-20: Hazelnuts lining fence.

Figure 4-21: A large wisteria vine grows up the side of the barn.

Figure 4-22: Shrub mass completely covered in grapevine.

Figure 4-23: Stacked stone steps and brick walk located along drive near entrance.

Figure 4-24: Brick walk through woodland and garden area.

Figure 4-25: Portion of walk along barn in poor condition.

Figure 4-26: Small brick landing along a garden path north of the house.

Figure 4-27: Gravel drive and fencing at entrance to property.

Figure 4-28: Stacked stone retaining wall along edge of drive.

Figure 4-29: Stacked stone culvert alongside the drive.

CHAPTER FIVE

Figure 5-1: Concept 1

Figure 5-2: Concept 2

Figure 5-3: Concept 3

CHAPTER SIX

Figure 6-1: Conceptual Development Plan (draft)

Figure 6-2: Alternative Entrance Option Locations

Figure 6-3: General Management Plan (draft)

Figure 6-4: Park-wide Recommendations

Figure 6-5: Park-wide Recommendations

Figure 6-6: Horticultural Resource Management Zone

Figure 6-7: Caretaker Residence and Visitor Orientation Zone

Figure 6-8: Historic Preservation Zone and Utilitarian Zone

Figure 6-9: Woodland Management Zone and Pond Management Zone

Figure 6-10: Meadow Management Zone



Chapter One

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Executive Summary

Property Description

The John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Park is a 13.6 acre property located at 3301 Hawthorne Lane, in Falls Church, Virginia, see Figure 1-1. Although the property has been owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) since October 1999, Mrs. White continues to live in her home as part of a life estate agreement with the County. Upon the expiration of the life estate, the property and its upkeep will transfer to Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) for operation as a horticultural park. The park is an important local cultural and horticultural landscape valued by the community and provides much needed open space in an area of the County that is highly developed. When open to the public, it will also provide passive recreational and educational opportunities for residents of the County and region.

The White Horticultural Park is comprised of a small parcel that sits within a suburban context approximately ten miles west of Washington, D.C. It is located in the Mason Supervisory District, and the Jefferson Planning District. The property contains several structures, to include the 1939 home, ca. 1876 barn, and other small outbuildings, as well as mature woodlands and an extensive collection of cultivated ornamental shrubs.

The park is bounded on all sides by established single-family residential properties, ranging from one to three domicile units per acre. These include residences of the Knollwood subdivision to the west, the Icabod Grove subdivision to the south, the Sleepy Hollow Park subdivision to the east, and the Garner Acres subdivision to the northeast. The park is accessed via a private drive extending from Princess Anne Lane on the west, see Figure 1-2. The property falls within County tax map 60-2 ((1)-20, 21, and 22).

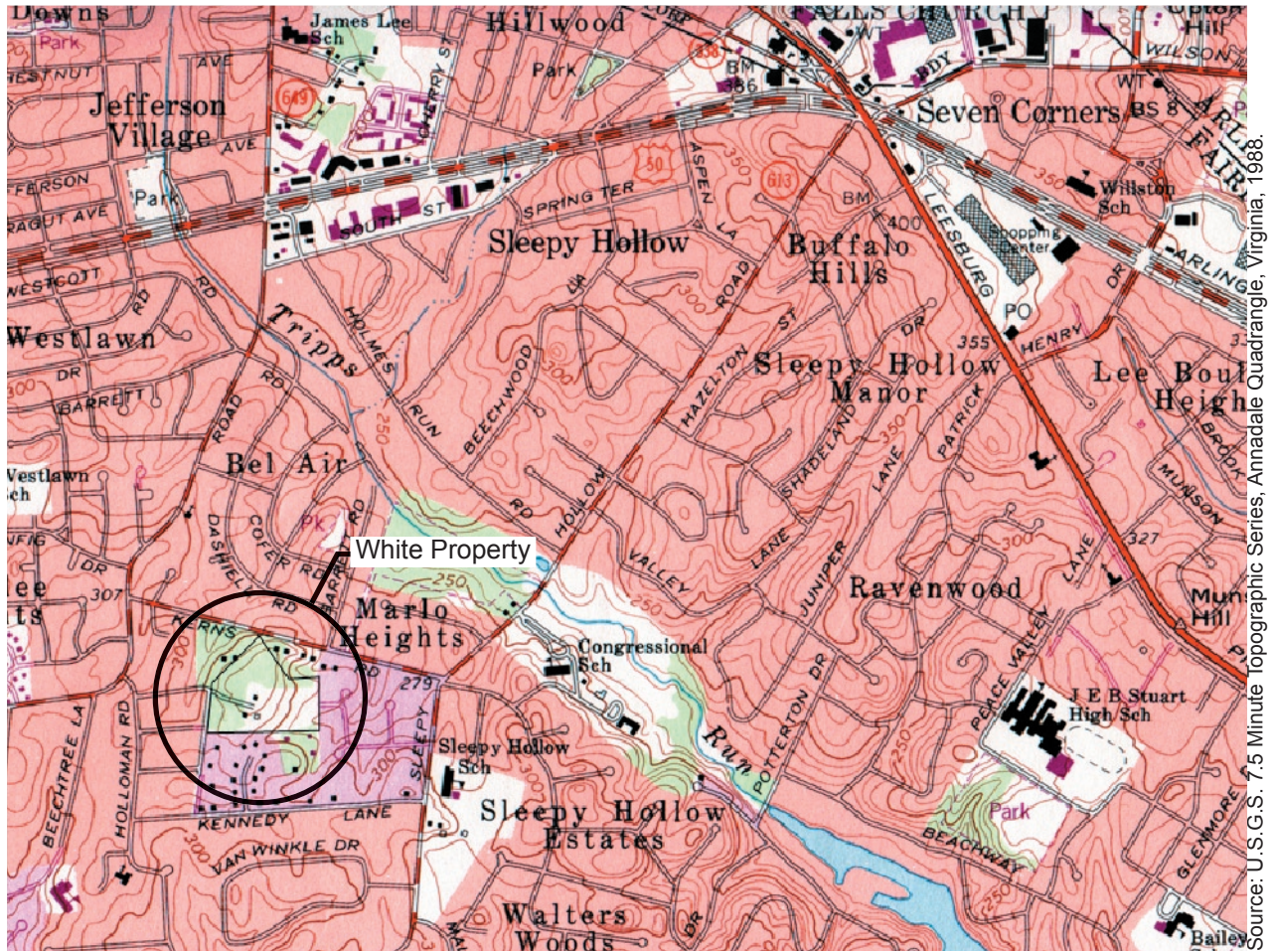
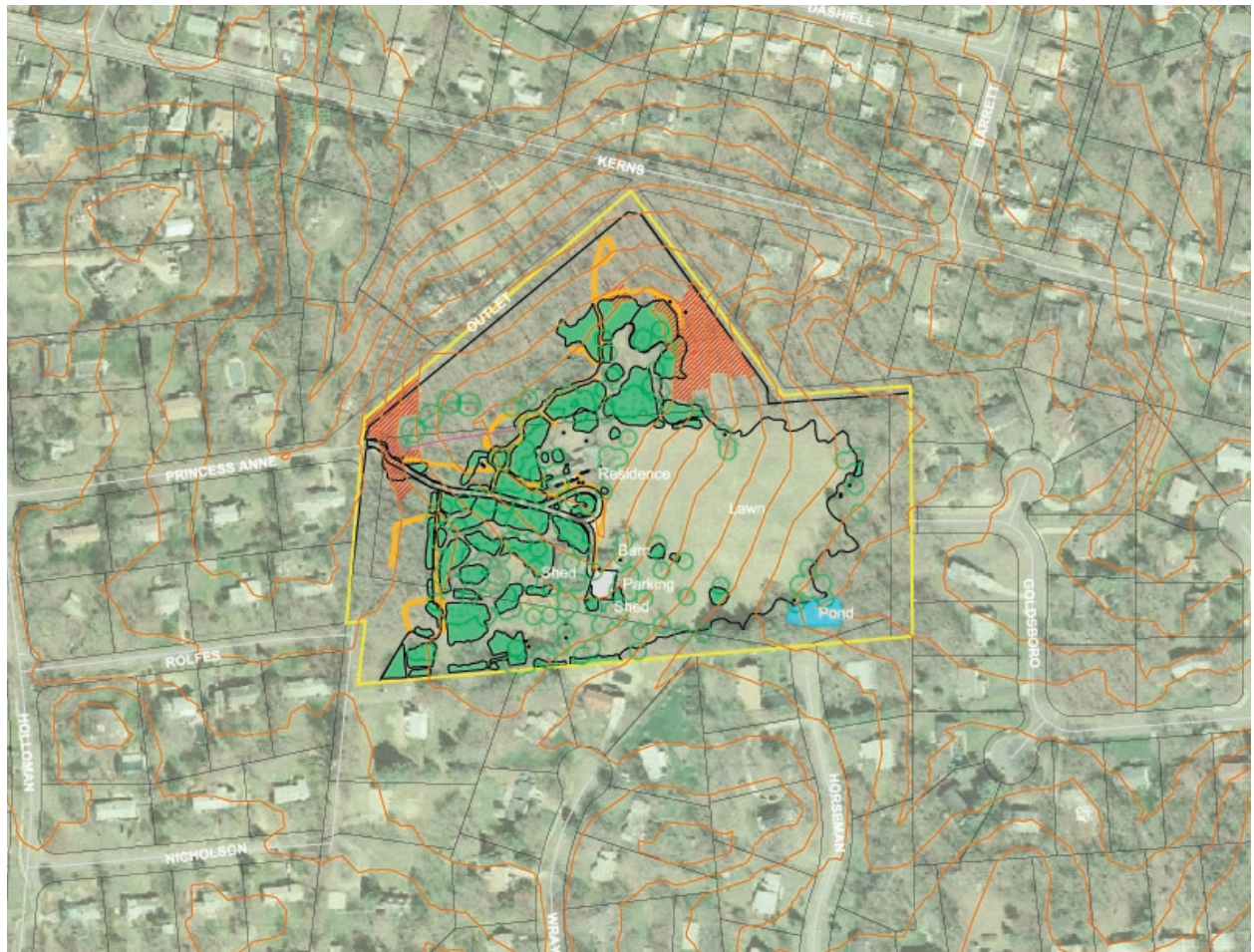


Figure 1-1: White Property Location Map.



Source: Fairfax County Park Authority, 2005.

Figure 1-2: White Property Vicinity Map.

Character Areas

The resource inventory and condition assessment conducted on behalf of this study found the White Horticultural Park to be comprised of eight different character areas, see Figure 1-3. These include the North Woodland, East Woodland, West Woodland, Upper Garden, Lower Garden, Residence Surrounds, Utilitarian Area, and Field. A short description of each is provided below:

- **North Woodland:** At 3.5 acres, the North Woodland is the largest of the three woodland character areas. It is moderately to steeply sloped downwards towards the northern property line, and is characterized by a large patch of interior woodland that is mostly free of exotic species. The overall condition of this area is considered good.
- **East Woodland:** This woodland character area partially encircles the eastern lower field area along the eastern property line and contains a small spring-fed pond. As a corridor of edge habitat, its species composition differs slightly from the other woodlands. The size of the East Woodland area is two acres, and its overall condition is fair as several trees appear to be in decline due to wounds, pest infestation, or disease. Opportunity for exotic invasive species infestation in this area is high as its proximity to other residences increases the chances of exotics seeding into the area.
- **West Woodland:** This character area includes the woodland area south of the drive along the western property boundary. Its stand composition is very similar to that of the North Woodland and contains several large trees. The size of this area is approximately one acre, and its overall condition is fair due to the abundance of exotic invasive species. The condition could easily become poor if the invasive plants are not properly managed.
- **Upper Garden:** This character area is 1.6 acres in size. It is situated on relatively flat topography, and includes the defined garden beds and shrub massings north of the drive that partially encircle the White residence. Mrs. White and others associated with the property refer to the garden area directly north of the residence as the “tennis court” because it is the former location of a clay tennis court. This area creates a unique space as several paths converge to meet in an open lawn area defined by the surrounding undulating garden beds. It has the largest and best maintained collection of horticultural resources. It is also well screened from the surrounding area and provides an intimate feeling of outdoor rooms. Its overall condition is good.
- **Lower Garden:** The Lower Garden is 1.4 acres in size and includes the shrub massings and garden beds south of the drive between the woodland and domestic area around the house, barn, and outbuildings. This character area consists of numerous shrub massings and garden beds of various sizes that are defined by the meandering paths that wind through this area. The northern portion has a thick canopy cover creating very shady conditions. Like the Upper Garden, this area contains a large collection of horticultural resources. However, invasive species are more prevalent here as this area is poorly maintained. The adjacent neighborhood to the south is also visible, creating a more open and less intimate character. Its overall condition is fair due to the presence of invasive species, and various plants showing signs of stress and decline.

- **Residence Surrounds:** Centrally located on a high point with nice views of the Upper Garden and Field, this character area is approximately one-half acre in size and includes the White residence, the foundation plants around the residence, and plantings within the circle drive. A mixture of hardwood trees partially encircles the glass porch. In back of the house, a very large white oak—the largest tree on the property—anchors the lawn area. The overall condition of this area can be considered fair, as some plants were observed to have wounds, pest infestation, or disease.
- **Utilitarian Area:** This character area is approximately one acre in size. It includes the barn and outbuildings, as well as the garden beds and shrub massings south of the drive that surround these structures and extends to the southern property line. It was identified as a separate character area because the plant composition differs from the other garden areas, and the overall spatial arrangement appears less ornamental and more utilitarian. This area has several large fruit and nut trees, but their horticultural resource value is not as high as in the garden areas. The overall condition of this area can be considered fair, as a considerable amount of plants in this area are in fair to poor condition.
- **Field Area:** Approximately three acres in size, this character area includes a large field east of the White residence. Maintained as a variety of grasses and herbaceous species, the field gently slopes away from the house and towards the eastern edge of the property. A few trees and small shrubs are scattered in the southern part of the field. The overall condition of this area is considered good.

Park Program

The General Management Plan (GMP) for this park is currently under development by the FCPA, and when complete, will serve as a guide for all future planning, design and programming. According to the draft GMP, the purpose of the John C. & Margaret K. White Horticultural Park is to: preserve, protect, maintain, restore and interpret the horticultural and natural resources of the property, provide educational and inspirational use of the resources, preserve and protect cultural resources, and provide passive recreation for citizens of Fairfax County.¹

Although an operations plan will be devised when the park opens for long-range planning purposes, it is anticipated that the park will be managed as a horticultural park open to the public on a daily basis with limited visitor support facilities. The user experience will be short-term, self-directed, and casual, and an on-site/resident caretaker will have limited responsibility for management of the property with volunteer support. Some special programs will be accommodated, but these will be limited in size. Limited and scheduled self-guided garden tours will also be provided during peak bloom season. It is projected that on average, 30 people will visit the park per day.

¹ Fairfax County Park Authority, General Management Plan: John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Park, draft. On file at Fairfax County Park Authority archives, Fairfax, Virginia.

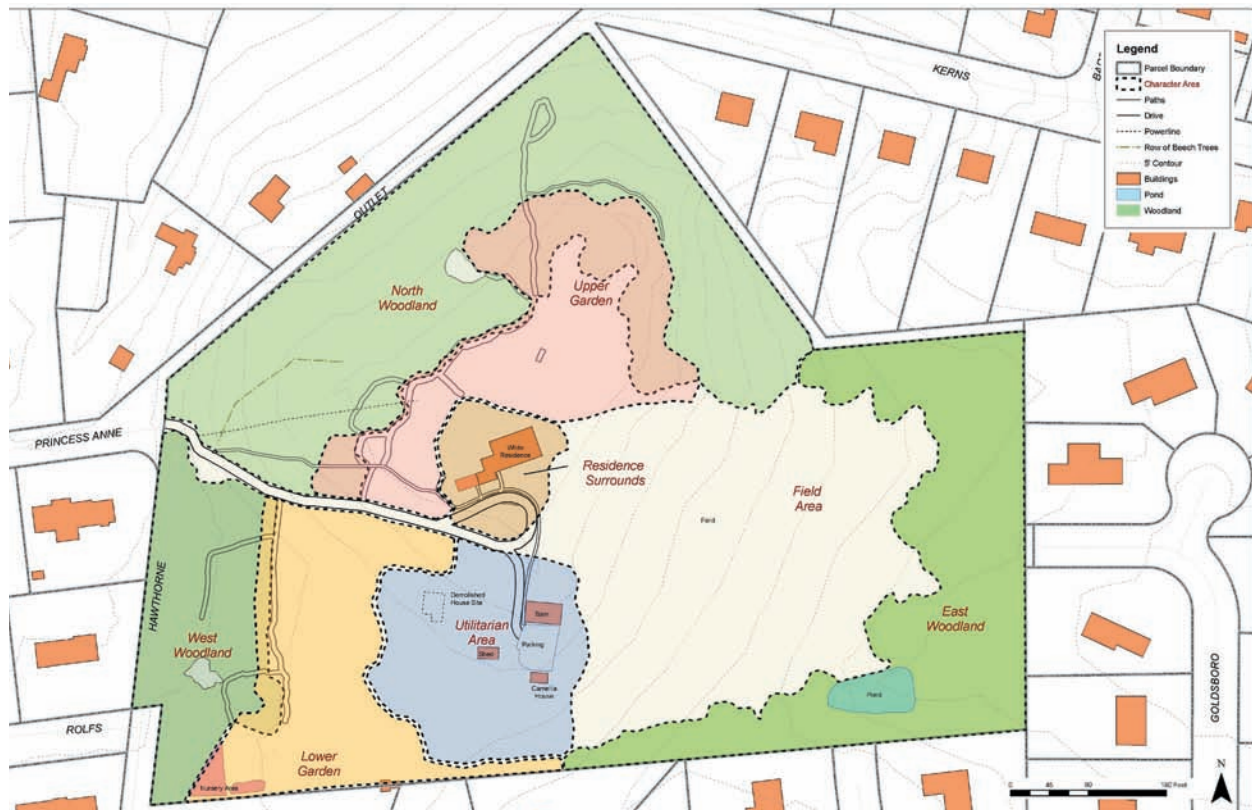


Figure 1-3: Character Areas

The following facilities and site improvements have been identified as necessary to support the park program:

- The existing residence will serve as a caretaker's residence with part of the first floor used to support garden/horticultural programs.
- An interpretive kiosk, appropriately sited to capture but not intrude upon important views from the house, will become a point of orientation for visitors.
- Existing trails will be expanded as needed to accommodate public use and connected with new trails to create a woodland perimeter trail.
- Demonstration gardens will be added in keeping with the existing woodland and garden areas.
- The open lawn area will be preserved as open space.
- Benches will be placed near trails and along the edge of the lawn and forest for resting and contemplation.
- Small interpretive signs will be installed along the trails and pathways.
- The barn structure will be stabilized and preserved, but public use/access will not be provided.
- Invasive plant species will be removed and managed to prevent further infestation.
- Perimeter fencing will be added as needed. Gates will be added at key points for controlled access to the property.
- Small maintenance/equipment storage building will be constructed in the parking area behind the barn.
- Vegetative screening will be added along the southern border (near the Kennedy property and properties at the end of Wraywood Place).

Vehicular Access and Circulation

One of the key issues concerning park management and development is vehicular access to and circulation within the park. There are five roads that lie adjacent to or terminate at the White property line, and could provide vehicular access to the site. These include Princess Anne Lane, Rolfs Road, Kerns Road, Goldsboro Court, and Horseman Road. As part of the GMP planning process, FCPA has documented the conditions of each road, as well as constraints concerning the improvements necessary to provide site access. Based upon the likely impacts to the horticultural, ecological, and overall landscape aesthetic, alternatives considering access from Princess Anne Lane and Goldsboro Court are recommended for further consideration as they will result in the least amount of damage to site resources.

Recommended Treatment Approach

As the significance of the park is centered on its horticultural resources, the recommended approach for overall treatment of the site is rehabilitation, with an emphasis on preservation of significant horticultural features, as well as the natural and historic resources that enrich their context. This treatment approach was selected based on the inventory and assessment performed for this study, anticipation of FCPA programmatic needs, and community desires expressed in the public workshops.

Management Zones

As a result of the GMP planning process, FCPA has identified seven management zones. These zones and their respective recommended management approaches are as follows:

- **Horticultural Resource Management Zone:** The Horticultural Resource Management Zone is comprised of the Upper Garden and Lower Garden. These two areas contain the highest concentration of rare and significant ornamental shrubs. It also contains many mature large-canopy trees that create the vertical and overhead planes and reinforce the sense of “outdoor rooms.” The recommended management approach to this zone is preservation of these horticultural resources as well as their overall spatial organization and character. A preservation approach maintains the existing integrity and character of a cultural landscape by arresting or retarding deterioration caused by natural forces and normal use, as well as changes that may be introduced by new uses. It includes both maintenance and stabilization. In light of the dynamic qualities of the landscape, maintenance is essential for the long-term integrity of the gardens.
- **Caretaker Residence & Visitor Orientation Management Zone:** The Caretaker Residence & Visitor Orientation Management Zone is comprised of the residence, foundation plantings, surrounding yard, brick pathways, and the existing driveway turn-around area. This area has been designated as the primary visitor orientation area that will contain a kiosk, or similar structure, containing park information and interpretive media. The recommended management approach to this zone is rehabilitation, which takes into consideration the need to convert the existing residence to a caretaker’s residence, with part of the first floor (living room, restrooms, sunroom, and greenhouse) used to support garden/horticultural programs.

Rehabilitation provides for the improvement of facilities to allow for a rich and fulfilling visitor experience, and the careful implementation of necessary functional site improvements with the preservation of the overall landscape character and individual horticultural features. More specifically, this approach will allow the necessary changes associated with circulation improvements to the driveway and paths, as well as modifications that may be necessary to make the residence ADA compliant. It will also provide for the addition of new elements into the landscape, such as the kiosk. A critical component of rehabilitation is the preservation of existing significant features. This will ensure the protection and maintenance of significant plants and garden beds surrounding the residence, as well as critical views.

- **Historic Preservation Management Zone:** The Historic Preservation Management Zone is comprised of the ca. 1876 barn and its immediate environs. This barn supported

the agricultural operations of this property while it was still a farm, and was later renovated by the White's for domestic uses. The recommended management approach to this zone is preservation, which seeks to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of this historic structure and surrounding landscape.

- **Utilitarian Management Zone:** The Utilitarian Management Zone, like the adjacent Historic Preservation Zone, was once the center of past agricultural operations. This zone supported Mrs. White's vegetable garden, a grove of fruit and nut trees, and two outbuildings that the White's used to support their horticultural pursuits. The recommended management approach to this zone is rehabilitation and reuse to support the maintenance operations of the park.
- **Woodland Management Zone:** The Woodland Management Zone is comprised of the North, West, and East Woodlands. These woodland communities contain tree species typical of an oak-hickory forest and provide much needed bird and animal habitat in a predominantly suburban environment. As such, the recommended management approach to this zone is preservation.
- **Pond Management Zone:** The Pond Management Zone is located in the southeast corner of the property and encompasses the spring-fed pond and its surrounding woodlands. Rehabilitation is the recommended management approach for this area, as improvements can be made to improve the pond's water quality and aquatic habitat. Also, this pond can serve as a key interpretive feature within the park, creating opportunities for educating the public about water resources and wetland plants.
- **Meadow Management Zone:** The Meadow/Field Management Zone is comprised of the existing open field that gently slopes towards the pond and eastern edge of the property. This field affords open and expansive views from the residence area. The recommended management approach for this zone is preservation.

Project Scope

This Landscape Management Plan has been prepared to support FCPA's efforts regarding management and future use of the property and is consistent with the Fairfax County Park Authority Policy Manual, Strategic Plan, and the Fairfax County Park Authority Natural Resources Management Plan. The Scope of Work for this study, as identified by FCPA at the initiation of the project, includes the following elements:

Task 1: Project Administration and Project Start-up Meeting and Park Visit

JMA participated in a start-up meeting and site visit on June 29, 2004, to meet project participants, including Mrs. White. The meeting was followed by a short walking tour of the property. This meeting consisted of the following agenda items:

- Review of the scope of work and draft project schedule.
- Discussion of the logistics of site access and relationship of the project to other planning projects for the park.

- Review of FCPA goals and objectives for the park and the project.
- Coordination for the collection of documents and materials to be furnished by FCPA.

Task 2: Data Collection and Review

JMA undertook collection and review of all data providing information on site conditions to support the preparation of the landscape management plan, including:

- Site history and oral interview transcripts;
- FCPA management issues, goals and objectives;
- FCPA base mapping and existing conditions data including historic and contemporary aerial photographs, ground photographs, plant inventories and related documentation;
- Topographic and boundary surveys; and
- Available programming and interpretive planning information.

Based on this information, JMA prepared a brief overview-level park history based upon information provided by FCPA on the origin and evolution of the park.

Task 3: Base Map Preparation

From the data provided by FCPA, JMA adjusted the base map as necessary to prepare for the mapping of existing conditions and site resources.

Task 4: Fieldwork/Landscape Inventory

JMA undertook fieldwork to document existing conditions. This fieldwork consisted of the inventory and documentation of landscape resources through use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) equipment and software to sub-meter horizontal accuracy (excluding buildings and public improvements). This task also included a planning-level inventory to identify woody specimen plants, the extent of woodland and open-field plant communities, and areas of herbaceous plantings. Inventory data included the location, genus, species, common name, size, and condition of woody plants, as well as the location of circulation features.

During fieldwork, JMA assessed the condition of landscape resources to enable FCPA staff to better manage the cultural landscape.

Task 5: Landscape Condition Assessment

Using data collected during Task 4, JMA prepared narrative documentation of existing conditions focusing on the horticultural landscape, with additional, less detailed data provided for constructed landscape features (excluding buildings). This included identification of landscape character areas for the park.

For each landscape character area, JMA described:

- Existing conditions and specific woody plants, plant communities, and landscape features.
- Condition issues.
- Treatment recommendations identifying representative landscape features/types requiring repair or plants/planting areas requiring maintenance, as well as the approaches and processes required to treat the condition (management guidelines). Where necessary, JMA identified the need for more information or specialized study/diagnosis.

Based upon the documentation of landscape resources through use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) equipment and software, JMA also prepared a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database and maps to illustrate the location of landscape resources and landscape character areas.

Task 6: 50% Draft Report

JMA prepared a 50% digital draft report, to include an introduction, overview of landscape physical history, resource inventory and condition assessment, an outline of final report elements, and a draft bibliography. At the request of FCPA, a contract change order was prepared to substitute a planned 50% review meeting with a Public Information Meeting held on December 6, 2004.

Additional Task: Public Information Meeting

At the request of FCPA, JMA prepared for and participated in a Public Planning Workshop held at Green Spring Gardens Park on March 22, 2005. This task involved the preparation of base maps for public review and input, and a powerpoint presentation summarizing the park's existing conditions and character areas.

Task 7: Landscape Management Charette (Optional Task)

At the option of FCPA, this task was not invoked.

Task 8: Landscape Management Approach and Concepts

This task involved the preparation of draft information on the recommended approach to landscape management and concepts concerning future park management and development.

Task 9: Public Planning Workshop

At the option of FCPA, this task was not invoked.

Task 10: Landscape Management Guidelines

This task involved the preparation of draft guidelines for the future management of the landscape, within the context of alternative park scenarios, and focusing on horticultural and natural resources.

Task 11: Landscape and Park Development Recommendations

This task involved the preparation of specific recommendations concerning preservation and rehabilitation of existing resources and new development to support FCPA goals and objectives. This task included illustration of concepts and options.

Task 12: 95% Draft Report

At the option of FCPA, this task was combined with Task 14, below.

Task 13: Review Meeting

At the option of FCPA, this task was not invoked.

Task 14: 100% Draft Report

This task involved the preparation of a 100% digital draft report, to include an introduction, overview of landscape physical history, resource inventory and condition assessment, landscape management approach and concepts, landscape management guidelines, and landscape and park development recommendations. At the option of FCPA, this task was combined with Task 12, and the draft report was formatted to include all narrative and graphic data to reflect the final graphic design of the report.

Task 15: Final Report

After review of the draft report, JMA completed final revisions and submitted a final version of the digital document with integrated graphics, and a digital copy of the GIS inventory database and maps.

Project Methodology

Project Initiation • Start-Up Meeting

On June 29, 2004, JMA team members met at the White Horticultural Park for an initial project meeting and site visit. Meeting attendees included:²

- Sandy Stallman, Project Manager/Long Range Planner, FCPA
- Ben Wharton, Arborist, FCPA
- Bob Wharton, Cultural Resources, FCPA
- Kirk Holley, Manager, Park Planning Branch, FCPA
- Angie Allen, Planner, Park Planning Branch, FCPA
- Chris Strand, Director, Green Spring Gardens, FCPA
- Rob McGinnis, Project Director, JMA
- Krista Schneider, Project Manager, JMA
- Alisa Hefner, Project Designer, JMA

Landscape Physical History Methodology

A brief overview-level landscape physical history was compiled from documents and historical data provided by FCPA, to include notes collected from an interview with Mrs. White, deed and land record investigations conducted by FCPA researchers, and a historic map of the White property. JMA did not undertake any additional research or investigations to document landscape history.

Base Map Preparation Methodology

Electronic AutoCAD and GIS base data was provided to the project team for use in developing the base map by FCPA Department of Information Technology, Division of Enterprise Systems, Geographic Information Services. Data included georeferenced orthophotos, property boundaries, topography, building outlines, streets, etc., for the County tax map grid tile 60-2. JMA used the base map to record field notes during the resource inventory.

² Two team members, Michael Rierson and Heather Melchior, were not able to attend.

Resource Inventory Methodology

The resource inventory was conducted July 19-23, 2004, by JMA team members Alisa Hefner and Aaron Cross. The objective of this planning-level inventory was to document, to the greatest extent feasible, the genus, species, common name, location, size, and condition of woody plants within the property, as well as the location of other important natural and cultural features.

Data was collected using a Trimble® Global Positioning System (GPS) Pathfinder® system, which included a Pro XR receiver and TSCe™ field device operating with TerraSync™ software. Location of features was collected with sub-meter accuracy. A data dictionary, tailored to the inventory criteria discussed below, was developed by JMA to collect attribute data in the field. Refer to Chapter Three for the inventory criteria and method of collection for each feature type, including trees, woody ornamental shrubs, garden beds and herbaceous plantings, and cultural features.

Condition Assessment Methodology

The condition assessment for all inventoried woody plants was based upon a visual inspection. The following criteria were used to assign a condition of good, fair, or poor:

- Good: Plant is free of obvious wounds, pest infestation, and disease; vigor is high, and plant growth and form appears normal.
- Fair: Plant shows minor signs of wounds or damage (either from past infestation or natural causes such as lightening); symptoms of minor pest infestation and/or disease is evident through abnormal leaf color, leaf scorch, wilting, defoliation, and/or dieback; plant vigor is moderate due to living and/or non-living factors (i.e. unfavorable environment).
- Poor: Plant shows evidence of major wounds, damage, or decay, with multiple symptoms of pest infestation, disease, and/or poor environment. Vigor is poor and plant is in decline. Further inspection is recommended. The condition assessment will address hazard concerns. However, the condition assessment will not be an exhaustive and complete inventory of hazard trees.

Digital photographs of representative features and special conditions were taken to provide supplemental documentation, with each photo assigned an identification number to reference it to the features photographed. Once fieldwork was complete, JMA post-processed the data for differential correction, using the U.S. Naval Observatory base station located in Washington, D.C. Base data was then exported into ArcView 9.0 for review and base map development, using the georeferenced orthophoto, site photographs, and field notes to further refine documentation of existing conditions.

On July 29, 2004, Alisa Hefner returned to the White property to field check the base map and attribute information. Where necessary, additional data was collected, post-processed in the same manner as discussed above, and added to the base map for graphic illustration of inventory features.

Landscape Condition Assessment Methodology

The landscape condition assessment was organized by character area and summarized the existing conditions found in the resource inventory. For most areas, the character area condition was based on the condition of the individual features that made up that area. Typically, the majority condition of individual features resulted in the same overall condition assessment for the character area. Individual features rated fair or poor were reviewed more closely to determine if that should affect the overall condition assessment for the area. If necessary, the condition assessment was altered to reflect the severity of individual features. For character areas that did not have component features with condition ratings, the condition criteria described above were used to assess the entire plant community.

Landscape management guidelines and recommendations were developed for existing resources. These provide guidance for maintaining or improving extant horticultural resources and cultural features identified in the resource inventory. Management guidelines and recommendations concerning future development of the park, in accordance with the GMP, are contained in Chapter Six.

Landscape Management Approach and Concepts Methodology

A recommended landscape management approach and concept alternatives were derived in concert with the FCPA general management planning process. The management approach, which places emphasis on the protection of horticultural resources, was based on the results of the analysis conducted for this study. Fairfax County regulations, such as the FCPA *Park Policy Manual*, *Strategic Plan*, and the *Natural Resource Management Plan*, were consulted to identify key planning and design considerations. FCPA staff provided vehicular access conditions and constraints information.

Landscape Management Guidelines and Park Development Recommendations Methodology

Based upon the results of the July 21, 2005, Public Workshop Summary, FCPA provided JMA with feedback on the preferred concept alternative. Based upon this input, JMA prepared landscape management guidelines and park development recommendations that will balance the needs of resource protection with opportunities for public use and park development. JMA also prepared resource impact assessments of each of the five parking and circulation alternatives, and identified which alternatives are appropriate for the site.

